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Scholar to Quit Post at Harvard Over C.I.A. Tie

Middle East Expert Will Keep Faculty Position

By FOX BUTTERFIELD

Special to The New York Times

CAMBRIDGE, Mass., Jan. 1 — The director of Harvard University's Center for Middle Eastern Studies will resign after an internal investigation into his acceptance of research funds from the Central Intelligence Agency, the school disclosed today.

A. Michael Spence, dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, said that Nadav Safran, director of the Middle Eastern center, would step down at the end of the academic year.

In a six-page report on the investigation, made available today, Mr. Spence said that the university itself was to blame for failing to act when Mr. Safran first informed it of a C.I.A. contract to help finance a book on Saudi Arabia. The contract contained restrictions that violated Harvard's rules on research sponsored by outside organizations, Mr. Spence concluded.

But Mr. Spence also concluded that Mr. Safran had been wrong not to disclose that the C.I.A. had provided money for a conference on Islamic fundamentalism at Harvard last fall.

Will Retain Professorship

Mr. Spence said he had accepted Mr. Safran's resignation "with sadness and deep reservation." Mr. Safran will remain a tenured professor at Harvard, where Mr. Spence said "his erudition and objectivity as a scholar have not been questioned."

Mr. Safran's use of C.I.A. funds touched off a controversy at Harvard, among Middle Eastern scholars and in some Arab countries.

There has also been bitter debate within the Harvard administration over Mr. Spence's report, school officials said, with some faculty members urging stronger action against Mr. Safran. Both Mr. Safran and his critics expressed disappointment today at the way Mr. Spence's investigation had been handled.

Mr. Safran contended the report exonerated him of charges that he had tried to cover up \$107,430 in C.I.A. funds for his book, "Saudia Arabia: The Ceaseless Quest for Security," and another \$45,700 in C.I.A. support for the conference. But Mr. Safran said Har-

vard had been "cold-hearted at best" in failing to prevent the dispute from damaging his reputation.

Report Termed a 'Whitewash'

However, Richard N. Frye, a professor of Iranian studies, described the report as a "whitewash" that examined only the "technical question" of whether Mr. Safran had complied with Harvard's requirements for reporting research funds.

"The broader moral issue of what he did was not addressed," Mr. Frye said. "From my knowledge of the field, this is a crisis."

"People in the field now have to worry about their lives being in danger, and all Harvard said is that it was a little mistake," Mr. Frye asserted.

On the other hand, Marshall I. Goldman, associate director of the Russian Research Center at Harvard who is a professor of economics at Wellesley College, said the report was "a very moderate, judicious attempt to heal the wounds."

The disclosures about Mr. Safran's acceptance of C.I.A. money "have affected the credibility of all of Harvard," Mr. Goldman said.

But Mr. Goldman said the case was a "tragedy" because Mr. Safran "had really helped make the Middle Eastern center a better place" in the two years he has run it.

In his report, Mr. Spence acknowledged that the publicity over Mr. Safran's handling of the C.I.A. funds "may have caused a loss of confidence in the center and in the university's ability to follow effectively its policies in areas that are crucial to scholars."

Disclosure of Financing

Mr. Spence's report found that Mr. Safran had violated Harvard's guidelines by not disclosing that he had a contract with the C.I.A. to sponsor the conference and by not informing the participants of the agency's role.

Mr. Safran said today that he viewed the C.I.A. as being "like any other source of funds" and that he felt there was no need to disclose the financing.

Harvard has no rule prohibiting professors from accepting research grants from any Government agency, including the C.I.A., Mr. Spence pointed out. But Harvard does have strict rules requiring its faculty members to notify the school whenever they receive Government or corporate funds and insure that the money does not carry any conditions that would abridge academic freedom.

In the case of the book on Saudia Arabia, Mr. Spence said Mr. Safran notified Henry Rosovsky, who was then the dean of the faculty, of the contract with the C.I.A. in May 1982, a week after signing it.

Restrictions Reported

Mr. Spence concluded that Mr. Safran had called attention to provisions that gave the C.I.A. the right to review and censor the manuscript and that prohibited Mr. Safran from disclosing the source of his funds to his publisher. Both conditions were in violation of Harvard's rules.

But Dean Spence said, "As far as I have been able to determine, he received no response" from Mr. Rosovsky. As a result, the university did not examine the contract and did not point out to Mr. Safran that it was an "institutional" contract involving Harvard and its rules, not merely an "individual" contract, as Mr. Safran has contended.

"These are clearly administrative errors in the faculty of arts and sciences, and not those of Professor Safran," Mr. Spence concluded.

Mr. Rosovsky concurred in an interview that his office had made "an administrative error." "I regret that," Mr. Rosovsky said.

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